



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12230

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May 25, 2007

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Portals II, Room TW-A325
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Reply Comments
Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications
Capability
GN Docket No. 07-45

Dear Ms. Dortch:

I am writing on behalf of the New York State Library to submit these reply comments in support of the Comments of the American Library Association (ALA) in this proceeding. The New York State Library is part of the Office of Cultural Education within the New York State Education Department. The Library works in partnership with New York's 73 library systems and over 7,000 public, school, academic and special libraries to deliver library services to New York's 19 million residents.

Given the important role that public libraries play in our society and economy, we encourage the FCC to increase its focus on the need to provide public libraries with enhanced broadband connectivity in this proceeding.

The ALA raised some important issues in its comments in this proceeding. I am writing to augment some of those concerns. First, we support the ALA's request that the Commission explore the impact of broadband technologies on public libraries. As the ALA noted, about 98% of public libraries provide some form of Internet access. In New York State our public libraries offer an average of 8 computers to our patrons per site and nearly 98% of them offer Internet connectivity. The average obscures the fact that some of New York State's smallest libraries, with the least likelihood of sufficient broadband capacity, have one or no computer for public access.

The Internet connectivity provided by our public libraries is increasingly important. We find that New York State's public libraries are used by students, immigrants, entrepreneurs, low-income people, teachers, and the elderly. Some of the most popular uses are homework help, job searching and locating e-government services, especially in support of state and

local business. The public library is often the first recourse for people in a community who either cannot afford or have no home access to computers or broadband connections.

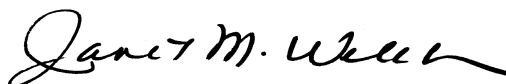
The ALA also noted, however, that only 45% of public libraries nationwide are satisfied with their level of broadband connectivity. We are concerned that the current marketplace is not working adequately to meet the needs of our public libraries. In New York State, we have found that the prices for broadband connectivity are difficult for libraries to meet, and some areas of the state have no choice in provider. The complexity of finding adequate broadband connectivity is often overwhelming and beyond the expertise of our librarian staff. As a result of these difficulties, we are not able to meet the needs of our patrons as we would like and as they expect. For instance, many of New York State's libraries report patrons must wait for terminal access at peak points during the day.

For these reasons, we support ALA's suggestion that the FCC should encourage the public providers of broadband connectivity to work more closely with public libraries. New York State's public libraries need more bandwidth, preferably at lower rates than the general "market-based rates" that are currently being offered to us. But most important, we would like to find a way for the broadband providers in New York State to work with us to find solutions to our broadband issues.

The New York State Board of Regents created a statewide Technology Policy and Practices Council to study the use of technology in education. Results of the survey conducted as part of this study are expected in the next month. The study will include information to add to our picture of broadband distribution and accessibility in the New York State's libraries and schools. The 2007/08 enacted state budget includes \$5 million to start a statewide broadband initiative to ensure that New Yorkers in upstate cities and rural towns and villages have increased access to affordable, high speed Internet Service.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact me at 518-474-5930.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Janet M. Welch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Janet" being more prominent and the last name "Welch" following in a similar style.

Janet M. Welch